



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, Chair, UD&P Committee
Councilmember Richard Conlin
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: June 6, 2005

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Update for June 8, 2005 Meeting

Land Use Workload Characteristics

The number of land use applications in April was similar to last year. However, so far in May, the number of applications is up 45% compared with last year (69 in 2005; 47 in 2004). Year to date number of applications is 10% above 2004 with a total of 232 MUP applications submitted. Part of the May increase may be due to the initiation of more drop-offs (rather than submittal by appointments) to compensate for limited resources due to Hansen Technology training.

Platting actions (lot boundary adjustments, short plats and unit lot short plats) continue to make up more than half of our MUP application activity. The number of Design Review applications doubled compared with last April, from 5 to 10 applications.

Production Goals: In the Land Use arena, we are emphasizing production. We have published a record number of decisions with a yearly total through April of 258 decisions compared to 185 decisions in this time period in 2004. This is a 40% increase and reflects a concerted effort to address the backlog.

Efficiency Measures: We are implementing ways to build capacity in planner's work days. For example, for simpler projects, such as most short plats, we are using a more standardized method of analysis to improve efficiency of review. Land Use supervisory staff are creating a plan for additional efficiencies. We are shifting some of the more administrative processing tasks from planners to support staff, negotiating for contract planners and recruiting temporary planners. We are also using overtime.

Performance for Building Plans

Non-routed Plans: In May, 71% of simple plans had initial reviews completed within 48 hours (target = 80% within 48 hours). The percent reviewed rises to 78% and 83% respectively within 72 and 96 hours. Pre-2003, the goal was 1 to 2 weeks.

Routed Plans: In May, 56% of complex plans were reviewed within six weeks (target = 80% within 6 weeks). The percent reviewed rises to 72% and 76% respectively within seven weeks and eight weeks. Pre-2003, the goal was 12 weeks. We have recently put consultant contracts in place to help improve our performance against the target for routed plans.

Large Project Activity

Ten permits, with a value greater than \$1 million, were issued in May. Notable among them were permits for 507 Maynard Avenue South and 617 South King Street. These permits are for rehabilitation of existing buildings in the International District that have been mostly vacant for many years. The projects involve apartment, hotel, retail and office uses. Four of the permits were for new mixed use structures, including the third and last phase of the project at 2200 Westlake Avenue.

Increase in Condominium Conversion Activity

The amount of conversion of rental apartments into condominiums is increasing. In five months thus far in 2005, we have received conversion inspection requests for 12 buildings containing 173 units. If the rate continues, we would see about a 30% increase compared with 2004. In addition, we are receiving inquiries on Seattle conversion requirements from companies across the U.S., including Florida and New York State. It should be noted that these figures do not necessarily represent all actual conversions of rental units in Seattle since the City does not inspect conversion for buildings that are less than 2 years old, and the conversion process may not be completed for some inspected units.

Interesting Enforcement Case?

We recently received a complaint from a neighbor, and were also called by the Fire Department on the same day, about a fraternity house in the University District. The students had erected an approximately 12 foot tall temporary fence on top of a brick retaining wall, and had constructed a number of other unsafe platforms and structures in anticipation of a special party/event that the fraternity celebrates every four years. Upon instruction from the DPD inspector, the fence was reduced in height to 6 feet and placed behind, not on top of, the wall, and the other unsafe structures were dismantled and removed. We did not have to issue a violation notice to achieve compliance. SFD was working with the students to cure fire code concerns and anticipated issuing a special event permit.

Public Outreach ... Recent Past and Future

June 4	Home Improvement Workshop at University Heights Center
June 6	Jan Gehl's "Public Spaces Public Life" at the Seattle Central Library
June 7	Northgate Stakeholders Forum - North Seattle Community College
June 21	South Downtown Planning Advisory Group - First Meeting
June 21	Viaduct/Waterfront Meeting downtown (Benaroya Recital Hall)
June 22	Viaduct/Waterfront Meeting at Interbay
June 23	Viaduct/Waterfront Meeting at West Seattle
June 29	Shoreline Alternative Mitigation Plan - Public Discussion of Advisory Committee Work, Ballard